

The Library Assistant:

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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

May General Meeting.

The seventh Meeting of the Session will be held at the **Hampstead Central Library, Finchley Road, N.W.**, on **Wednesday 10th May**, at 7.30 p.m. **MR. W. E. DOUBLEDAY**, Borough Librarian, has kindly consented to preside, and the following papers will be read:—

PUBLIC LIBRARY RULES AND REGULATIONS. By **Geo. E. Roebuck, F.L.A.**, Chief Librarian of Walthamstow.

FINANCIAL LOANS: METHODS OF BORROWING AND REPAYMENT. By **R. F. Bullen**, Poplar Public Libraries.

It is confidently expected that there will be a large attendance at this meeting, the first occasion on which the Association will have met at Hampstead, both on account of the value and interest of the papers that are to be read, and because of the opportunity afforded of seeing this interesting library. The Hampstead libraries have made a name for themselves under Mr. Doubleday's administration for progressive work, and it is a privilege to be able to see their working, which should not be missed.

The Central Library is within a few minutes' walk of Finchley Road Stations on the Metropolitan and on the Midland from St. Pancras; and is almost opposite to Froggnal station on the L.N.W.R. line. There is also a good service of motor buses to Child's Hill, Finchley and Hendon, which pass the door.

At this meeting two auditors will be elected. Nominations should reach the Honorary Secretary prior to the meeting.

ANNUAL MEETING. PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE SIXTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING will be held by kind permission of the Council, at **Sion College, Victoria Embankment, E.C.** There will be the counting of the Ballot for Council at 5.30 p.m., and at 6.30 a Conference will be opened by the reading of two papers. 1. "The L.A.A. and Its Policy in Relation to the Progress of the Public Library Movement." By **W. Benson Thorne, F.L.A.**, Poplar Public Libraries, Hon. Secretary Education Committee. 2. "The L.A.A. and Its Policy in Relation to the

Individual Assistant in Libraries." By **W. Ewart Owen**, Coventry Public Libraries, Hon. Secretary, L.A.A. Midland Branch. The **Annual Business Meeting** will be held at 8 p.m.

ANNUAL ELECTION OF COUNCIL AND OFFICERS.

The Honorary Secretary is prepared to receive nominations for Council and Officers for the ensuing year. The Council is composed of two Fellows, ten London and ten Provincial Members, and the Officers consist of a President, Vice-President, who must be a non-London Member, Honorary Treasurer, and Honorary Secretary. Nominations must be addressed to the North Islington Library, Manor Gardens, N., not later than May 16th. Ballot papers will accompany the June number of "The Library Assistant."

EDITORIAL.

Librarianship.—"The Westminster Gazette" waxes satirical anent the recent advertisement. We quote its remarks in full. "Where is the reckless extravagance of the London County Council going to stop?" It says, "They are now offering a salary of £120 a year for a woman librarian, 'competent to undertake the organisation and routine of a library, well acquainted with English and foreign literature, able to speak and write French and German, and conversant with the contents of Board of Education reports, and those issued abroad on educational subjects.' It will be noticed that she is not even expected to undertake the duties of deputy-chairman, or to have a scheme for getting rid of the Aldwych site; and yet this is referred to as a 'commencing' salary!" We are sorry that the excellent "Gazette" does not realise that this is not so badly paid an appointment as that of many librarians. The path of the librarian may lead to an abundance of useful educational work and to not a little fame. It certainly never leads to wealth. Only too sadly has this been demonstrated by the advertisement for a chief librarian to the Borough of Chorley, Lancashire. In this instance a fully qualified librarian is required and the salary offered is £80 per annum. Well may "Truth" express its scorn of the Chorley authorities. But this is riches indeed compared to the salary offered by the Borough of Lewes. Fortunately for Lewes, the advertisement is hidden from the world at large in the pages of a local paper; but it is none the less true, that a librarian and caretaker with a wife is required for the Public Library, at a combined salary of £52 per annum! Is it surprising that every now and again irresponsible comments such as those which appeared in "The Standard" soon after the Annual Meeting of the Library Association should be published, commenting adversely on the work of public libraries, when they are placed in the hands of such people as can exist in a

married state on a pound a week? One of the most urgent needs for reform is in the direction of the better recognition of the work of libraries by a more liberal grant for their upkeep. It cannot be expected that a caretaker will have the intimate knowledge of books, the special training in their use, and the hundred other qualifications necessary to a librarian. Neither can the libraries placed in the charge of such people be expected to be other than rubbish heaps seasoned with books. But while such extreme cases as Lewes are comparatively rare, there are still a number of libraries struggling under the difficulties of Chorley. The rate limit is of course responsible for most of the disabilities suffered by libraries; but there must be a lack of proportion in the use of the rate when a Borough of 35,000 inhabitants only offers £80 for its librarian. As for Lewes, it deserves what it will get. Far better is it to have a smaller collection well chosen by a competent man, than more books of inferior quality administered by one who has not sufficient training even to understand their use. All honour be to such men as the late Mr. McKnight, who has done such an abundance of good work, in circumstances that must have been disastrous to health and spirits.

This is a gloomy picture to draw; but "there's mair i' the kitchen." From "The Pall Mall Gazette" of April 20th, we quote a paragraph headed "Mr. Lloyd George's Finance." "Mr. Lloyd George's Finance Act is seriously hampering the work of the various library committees in London. The great reduction in the product of a penny rate, the limit that can be levied for the upkeep of the public libraries, is having a disastrous effect. The Libraries Committee of the Southwark Borough Council have been compelled to close their branch reference libraries in the Old Kent Road, Borough Road, and Southwark Bridge Road, at nine o'clock at night, instead of ten, as has hitherto been the case. By this means it is anticipated there will be a reduction in the account for lighting. The Committee have had to curtail the supply of newspapers, periodicals and books, and are considering the reduction of the staff in order to keep their expenditure within the reduced limits of a penny rate." We do not wish, and there is no need, to enter into the question of politics. Public Libraries have felt the pinch, more badly in some cases than in others, and quite enough in every case; but we can hope that the injury will be noticed, and that it will be duly remedied. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the Pall Mall's paragraph is the reality of library poverty. The library

rate must not exceed a penny, say the Statutes; and the consequence is that Committees do not have a chance to approach the ideal of libraries as "an integral part of education," and a power in the social life of the community. An alteration in rateable value occurs, and libraries have to shut down earlier to save the lighting bill. A ceiling falls down and the new books must be curtailed to effect repairs. A more disastrous accident happens and the supply of new books ceases altogether.

There must be something in the air that has brought such an outburst of gloom into our cheery pages. Rembrandt used to paint dark scenes in order to get a contrast of light. Perhaps we too may show a gleam of light to brighten the library landscape. Reform is necessary and we believe it is coming; not, however, from the wild schemes of Mr. William Weare, whose book we have received for review without the burst of joy anticipated in these pages. It can only be brought about as we are able to create public opinion on the subject. That three prominent journals should almost simultaneously devote space to the cause of libraries is a sign of interest. The libraries themselves are creating interest by the force of their work in the face of such difficulties. Who can say that it is not necessary for Assistants to combine in order to help on the work in which they are engaged? We must combine and fight against such unfairness as we have outlined. The Council of this Association is determined in every case, by agitation in the local press, by resolutions to the Borough Councils concerned, and by every possible means to put a stop to such insults to librarianship as are offered by Chorley and Lewes.

The Report on Conditions of Library Service.—The work of tabulating the information supplied by public librarians throughout the kingdom, and of drawing up a report on the hours and conditions of library service, is now practically completed, and the report will be presented to the next meeting of the Council. Thereafter the report will be published within as short a time as possible.

The Brussels Meeting.—The Holiday School at Brussels is now an event of the past, and to those who have come into contact with any members of the party, it has been plainly evident that the outing was a success. But "successful" is only a poor word by which to describe the "cameraderie," of the party the pleasant excursions made together, the visits to the wonderful works of the Brussels "Institut," the voyages over the calmest moonlit seas, and the entire

freedom from any sort of mishap, during the holidays. Members in England, Belgium, and Holland, will remember with pleasure the time spent together; and they will eagerly look forward to another such outing. Already it has been proposed that the Association should meet next Eastertide in Holland, where is a Library Association to make us welcome, and a system of libraries modelled on that of England. But we must leave the announcements until later!

The Hampstead Meeting.—We look forward with the greatest pleasure to our first visit as an Association to Hampstead. The Library is most pleasantly situated in its own garden, and provides features of interest to everyone. Mr. Roebuck's paper will be looked forward to with interest, as it is well-known that the Rules in operation at Walthamstow are the outcome of a wide experience and are wisely planned with a view to properly safe-guarding the Library on the one hand, as well as to bestowing the greatest possible advantages on the public on the other. Mr. Bullen's subject is one which is usually regarded as dry and uninteresting, and is therefore not given that attention which its importance demands. But with the memory of Mr. McGill's successful treatment of so uninviting a topic as statistics, we have no fears for the result.

Nominations for Council and the Annual Meeting.—Our readers are reminded of an important duty in the announcement as to nominations which appears in this number. If there is any cause for dissatisfaction as to the working of the business of the Association, now is the time for members to work for a change in the personnel of the Council. On the other hand there is an opportunity for fresh enthusiasm to be brought into the Association. The ballot papers will be issued with the next number of the journal, and to facilitate their preparation, it is hoped that nominations will be sent in as early as possible. The programme for the Annual Meeting is one of the greatest interest, and we expect to welcome Members from all parts of the country.

The North-Eastern Branch.—It will be seen, from the report published in the present number, that the North-Eastern Branch elections have resulted in great changes in the personnel of the Officers and Committee. We have pleasure in congratulating the Branch on the appointment of its Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, all men who will carry on the fine work of their predecessors. To Mr. Walton, the retiring chairman, the Association owes a debt of gratitude which will always be remembered in the vigour

of the Branch and in his work for the banding together of Assistants throughout the kingdom. Mr. Walton, in retiring from the chairmanship, is, of course, not disconnecting himself from the work of the Branch. He is still a member of the Committee. Nor is the Association unaware of the admirable work of the retiring Honorary Secretary, Mr. Gibson, who has thrown into his office a tact and success for which we cannot be too grateful. Mr. Potts also receives our thanks.

LIBRARY STATISTICS NECESSARY & UNNECESSARY AND THE PURPOSE OF STATISTICS.*

By WILLIAM MCGILL, F.L.A., of the Islington Public Libraries.

In Dean Ramsay's "Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character" there is the following story:—"The late celebrated Dr. Macknight, a learned and profound scholar and commentator, was nevertheless, as a preacher, to a great degree, heavy, unrelieved by fancy or imagination; an able writer, but a dull speaker. His colleague, Dr. Henry, well known as the author of a History of England, was, on the other hand, a man of great humour, and could not resist a joke when the temptation came upon him. On one occasion when coming to church, Dr. Macknight had been caught in a shower of rain, and entered the vestry soaked with wet. Every means were used to relieve him from his discomfort; but as the time drew on for divine service he became much distressed, and ejaculated over and over, "I wish that I was dry; do you think that I'm dry; do you think I'm dry eneuch noo?" His jocose colleague could resist no longer, but, patting him on the shoulder, comforted him with the sly assurance, "Bide a wee, Doctor, and ye'se be dry eneuch when ye get into the pu'pit." I have a dry subject to deal with to-night, so I hope that you will bear with me for a little. I had the curiosity to look at all the numbers of "The Library Assistant" published during the past thirteen years of its existence to see if anything on the subject of statistics had appeared in its pages, but failed to find anything.

Let us try to get at the meaning of the term Library Statistics. They are, I take it, or should be, the statements of results or of facts of reading, the issue of books, attendance at the Reading Rooms, and figures of a like nature. In

*Paper read before the Library Assistants' Association, at the Battersea Public Library on Thursday, March 16, 1911.

business and commercial life facts can be put into figures in many cases; but it is impossible to reduce to, or express in, figures, the increase of goodness or of better living or conduct in a place due to the reading of books. You cannot inform anyone definitely of the number of pages read or studied or of volumes read or unread during any period of a Library's existence. It is assumed by many that books issued for home reading are read, but we all know that very often they are not, and the number of issues is not a true statement of the amount of reading or of study done—for some books may be read by different members of the same family during the period they are in circulation, and that is counted as one volume read. We are prone to exaggerate the importance of statistics, and to infer that the work of a Library can be fully tabulated. For instance, those who have experience of open access know that there is a large amount of browsing and unrecorded consultation done. As a matter of fact, I am of opinion that the larger part, the better part, you cannot put into figures, and it is a good service to examine critically into the origin, growth, and uses of every-day things that we have been in the habit of taking for granted as part of the accepted order of nature. Figures are dangerous things—remember what the cynic said about statistics—and our trying to get at the results of reading and of study is of more use than this continual publishing of statistics. Can you and I, even if we accomplish much, keep any record of our achievements? Can any body or society tabulate its influence for good? Can a table ever be prepared showing the hours of thought spent by a conscientious Librarian in trying to make the Library under his charge useful and attractive? It hardly comes into the scope of this paper, but I think we might consider for a little the diverse methods employed and not employed in the compilation of the average Library report when reporting on its statistics. I admit that some Library statistics have no chink in their armour—because they are nothing but a mass of chinks—you cannot see the armour for the chinks. Of course, it is not always judicious to make statistics prove anything—especially if they are against the wisdom of the Library Committee. If statistics are to have any comparative value we must agree on rules and methods for their compilation, and the circulation of books should be counted in accordance with these rules. I put no more faith in comparative Library statistics than I do in a Conservative returning officer at a Parliamentary election counting the votes given to the Liberal candidate. Therefore it is unfair

to compare one place with another, owing to the different methods in which statistics are compiled, and when comparing their comparative value it is necessary to bear in mind the following points—points which are rarely or never given in a report: does the report show the different circumstances of each Library, the proportion of fiction available; to what extent readers have free access to shelves; whether the currency of tickets is long or short; the system of fines levied—for if heavy the Library benefits in circulation; the length of time a book may be borrowed; if short, the Library benefits in number of issues, although the reader may not, and the Library allowing a longer period is missing issues, although perhaps doing better work; the number of tickets and volumes allowed to each borrower; if there are extra tickets for non-fiction, music, and for teachers—in some places teachers may have four or more tickets; if there is an age limit for children, and if children are limited to one book a week, as at Islington; the days and hours open during the week; if open on Sunday; if closed half a day weekly; if the renewal of a book under Library rules is counted as an issue; if fiction is included with poetry and drama, as in some places; if non-ratepayers require more than one guarantor; if the Library will not change books issued during the same day; if a count is made and included in the issue of books consulted on the open shelves; if any of the current magazines handed over the counter to readers are counted in the issues, as is done in some places; if the returns are inflated by the issue of long sets of works when only one volume is required; if a volume of pamphlets, containing say sixteen items, is counted as sixteen or one in the issue; if a volume, say *Chambers's Journal*, when bound is counted as one or as twelve issues; if turnstiles are used for recording the number of visits made, and if they are stiff or kept well oiled; if the staff are counted as visitors in places using turnstiles; and if the returns are meant for brother and sister Librarians to wonder at and covet? Many other points might be given, but some of these just given are necessary for our consideration. It is not possible to compare data which have nothing or little in common, and the desirability of having a uniform system is necessary and apparent to all. It is recognised that we meet with a difficulty at the outset, for if every Library were to begin afresh on some standard system, comparison with its own previous work would be difficult or impossible. These are a few of the difficulties confined to one part of our subject, but when we come to classification the diversity is endless. For

example, take four Libraries using the following classification numbers in compiling their statistics: One uses six classes, another seven, another nine, and another fifteen. The one using six classes has Theology and Philosophy; History and Travels; Politics and Commerce; Science and Arts; Literature and Polygraphy; Works of Fiction; the one with fifteen has Theology and Morals; Natural Philosophy; Jurisprudence and Law; Social Science and Commerce; Education and Language; Topography and Antiquities; Classical Literature; Miscellaneous Literature and Magazines; Natural History; Science and Arts; General History; Biography and Diaries; Poetry and the Drama; Geography, Voyages, and Travels; Dictionaries and Heraldry. When we see a book like the "Scenery of Switzerland" at Topography and Antiquities in one Library, and at Science and Arts in another; "The Pilgrim's Progress" at Theology and Philosophy in one and at Fiction in another; Clemens's "Tramp Abroad" at Fiction in one and at History and Travels in another, one is driven to the conclusion that there is very little common ground or basis for comparison. If these were isolated examples it would not matter very much, but it is so common to find hundreds of cases like these. On this subject of classification what we want—or rather what we require—for we do not want it—is some Brown, Cutter, Dewey, or other who shall actually force us to adopt a uniform system of classification when counting our issues, for until there be this, statistics cannot be absolute. Who will attempt this work? I doubt it will be difficult to find one unless we approach the average Library caretaker, a type of individual who is always ready to give the name, nature, and object of anything in the heaven above or the earth beneath.

Now let us come to the Reading Room for a little. What is a visitor? Some Libraries having a turnstile count everyone who enters the building as a visitor. A reader goes to the Reference Department, and is counted as a visitor; another goes to the Reading Room—he also is a visitor: the one consults a book, and the book is counted in the issue. He is counted twice over—as a volume issued and as a visitor. One visitor may enter ten or twenty times a day. Suppose a Reading Room attracts 500 people a day, it is possible that the real number of visitors may be only a little over 400. It is unnecessary and impossible to obtain the exact number of visitors using a Reading Room, so that word should be dropped, and the word visits used instead. Actual counts kept all day long should give a true number,

but no one can afford to do this, and the averages of occasional counts made daily, hourly, or otherwise are absolutely valueless if we want to get at the truth. How I love to think and puzzle over the Hourly Count! It is so delightfully artless and Arcadian in its sweet, innocent, and childlike simplicity. You all know the method. You take your count on a wet day, and count in the same old loafers over and over again. I have long tried to find out the inventor of the hourly count, but have failed. He must have been a man of a singularly trustful, easy-going, and *ca' canny* disposition. I wish everyone here who uses the hourly count to get the total number of visits to bow his or her head, and devote one moment to silent prayer for the repose of his soul. He requires it, for he has been the means of a dreadful lot of lying statistics. It may be remarked here that it has been noticed that the number of undesirable readers is less, and a better class frequent a Reading Room where there are no newspapers or where betting news is obliterated, and where the Situations Vacant columns are cut out and exhibited not in the room.

What do the average ratepayer and member of a Library Committee see in statistics, if they ever look at the long row of figures neatly arranged? He, no doubt, wonders if all these elaborate figures, showing issues by months, days, years, classes, etc., are not a costly and unnecessary fad. Besides, many of them are quite puzzling to a member of a committee—they have a repellent look, and to judge from the lines rising and falling showing the increase and decrease of issues, he may wonder if one of the pages from the Report of the Medical Officer of Health, showing how he has combated and kept down the increase of enteric fever, has not crept in by mistake. Or, he may imagine that it is one of the pages of the publications of the Meteorological Office showing the rainfall, or, if black, coloured, and dotted lines be used, it may appear to him as a diagram from a manual of geology. What impression do these reports make on the average person? It is well to put ourselves into their place sometimes, and be ready for the "Twenty Years a Ratepayer" type, and it may be interesting to give the opinion of one who has studied Library reports from the outside. Plenty of articles have appeared against Libraries in periodical literature, but as they are soon forgotten and the book remains, it may be found profitable to give some attention to a book which has had a wide circulation and no little influence. It is rather old now, but is still selling and in print. I tried to get the number of copies published from

Mr. John Murray, the publisher, but he could not give me the information desired, although he stated in reply to my letter that four editions were printed in two years. The book is entitled "A Plea for Liberty," edited by Thomas Mackay, and contains an introduction by Herbert Spencer. One of the chapters is headed "Free Libraries," and is written by Mr. M. D. O'Brien. It is against Free Libraries, and contains a "Table showing the amount paid and the work done for it." The returns are old, but attention is drawn to them as showing what thousands have read about "Free Libraries" as given in this book. The date of the establishment of 23 Libraries, with a table showing the population, contribution from rates, total borrowers, total volumes in Lending Library, annual issue, daily average, prose fiction issues, and percentage of issues in fiction. A note is added, stating, "It should be remembered that a vast quantity of novels are read in the bound and unbound magazines; these are not included in the issues of 'prose fiction' [if so] they would greatly increase the issues of fiction." The writer goes on to say, "The enormous amount of light reading indulged in by the frequenters of Free Libraries leads us to expect that these places are largely used by well-to-do and other idlers. . . Says Mr. Mullins, the Birmingham Librarian, 'No delicacy seemed to deter the poor tramp from using not only the News-room, but also the best seats in the Reference Library for a snooze.' . . . After the non-sense usually indulged in by the officials of literary pauperism such candour as this is positively refreshing. It is seldom the high priest allows us to look behind the curtain in this fashion. As a rule, the admission is much less direct, and can only be gathered from a careful analysis of the statistics. According to the Bristol report for last year, there were 416,418 borrowers during the twelve months preceding December 31, 1889; of these 148,992 are described as having 'no occupation.'" Mr. O'Brien then gives the example of Newcastle. "At Newcastle-on-Tyne there were 11,620 persons used the Reference Library, and only 3,949 of them were of 'no occupation.' Yet, notwithstanding the numerical weakness of the latter, they managed to consult nearly half the books that were consulted during that year. The total number consulted was 36,100, and 16,800 were used by people who had 'no occupation.'" I shall quote no more from this book. I neither agree with Mr. O'Brien nor his "careful analysis of the statistics," and I do not feel called upon to examine the figures quoted by him. The ordinary reader without thinking much about it would naturally class

those of "no occupation" as loafers. Librarians, however, know the meaning attached to the term, but it does not follow that every reader of the report does. Moral: Make our statistics understandable by the people.

A word about that never-ending question, Fiction. A Library *reporting* (and I do not use the word *doing*) an average issue of 41 per cent. of non-fiction is generally summed up as doing better than one reporting 37 per cent. The one may be issuing 59 per cent. of fiction, and the other 65 per cent., but do we consider that one may be issuing good healthy standard fiction and the other may be issuing trash? Why not try to classify our novels into standard, medium, and trash? It has been suggested before, and it would be interesting to see our novels classed like this in a report. But none of us would care to admit that our shelves contained trash, and most of us would even draw the line at medium. A Library in a mill town issuing 80 per cent. of good fiction circulating in the homes of tired working women may be doing as good work as one issuing 40 per cent. in a more cultured community.

I doubt that I have exceeded my time, but a moment may be left for the consideration of the general question of the purpose of statistics. They should try to tell their own story, for very often the Librarian is the only one able to do so. Look at some of the American reports received during the past few weeks. The borrowers in one town number about 5,000; total issues central and branches, 235,000; and yet a volume of statistics of 130 pages is issued, but you will not find any statistics showing the issues for the year classified by subjects—surely one of the very first and most important things that a Library ought to tell, especially as this Library is properly classified. Again, they tell the increase in the use of borrowers' cards for the year, and the number precisely that had been given out to replace lost or soiled cards, but never a word about how many borrowers are in active living touch with the Library, and that again is one of the few essential things that one wants to know. Many other American Libraries fail in the same way in respect of offering a mass of inconsequent statistics and failure to give the essential things in the right way. In conclusion, I should like to submit the following points for discussion:—

Judging from reports and statistics published by British municipal Libraries, is it not the case that the outsider has small chance of gleaning information of a sociological interest from the ordinary figures put forward in a report?

If, as has been claimed, the Public Library is an important factor—educationally and recreatively—in the life of a civilised community, and the relative demands made on its various classes of books and departments reflect the wants and needs of the district, then there is abundant evidence in reports that those responsible fail to recognise the sociological value of their statistics. Is it not the case that the longer a report the less chance it has of being read? Instead of the computed number of visits made to a Reading Room, is it not better to state simply that it is well used? It may be safely assumed that all Reading Rooms are well used. It would be better stating this than giving an alleged or bogus return based on hourly counts, etc. Failing this, would it not be better to state bluntly that our figures are not accurate, and to explain the methods by which we arrive at our results?

Until we have a uniform system of compiling statistics, is the aggregate number of issues in each department not enough for any report? The percentage of circulation to volumes and the cost of issuing each volume might be stated.

[In the subsequent discussion, Mr. STEWART (Islington) said he was glad to find that Mr. McGill had condemned statistics. He was in entire agreement, because the time spent in compiling them was wasted. They could not be, and, indeed, were not, meant to be understood by committeemen and general readers. Mr. PETERS (Lewisham) illustrated the uselessness of the average Library statistics by showing how in some cases the figures were swelled by counting all the volumes of a work when only one was used. Mr. J. D. BROWN (Islington) agreed with the paper, affirming that there was no possibility of comparison between the figures of different libraries because there was no standard of comparison; local conditions, staff, classification, and other circumstances all tended to creating confusion rather than reliability of information. Statistics were of no earthly use, and the ordinary reports were a waste of time, energy, and money. The only kind of statistics of use was the aspect of the library itself. If the Committee desired them, a type-written monthly statement was quite sufficient. Mr. SAYERS (the President) said that statistics could never be qualitative; they must be quantitative. One could not wonder at the uselessness of the average library report, because no attempt was made to set out the work of the library in literary form. The reports could be made of great value, and have a large amount of advertising power, if they

were presented readably. Mr. PURNELL (hon. editor), in seconding the vote of thanks, remarked that he thought Mr. Stewart had over-stated the facts when he said that Mr. McGill condemned statistics entirely. He (Mr. Purnell) thought the paper did not condemn, but showed the need for a standard of compilation which would make them of use. If a library had 100 books of philosophy and lent them out 1,000 times to 500 borrowers, the fact should be stated, and if all other classes were similarly treated in a clear manner showing how the figures were made up the information would be useful.]

THE DIARY OF AN EASTER PILGRIMAGE.

By OLIVE E. CLARKE.

The Council of the Association is to be congratulated upon the unqualified success of the Easter School which was held at Brussels from Friday, April 14th, to Monday, April 17th. The school, which was the first of its kind abroad, partook of an international character and was a great step towards the entente cordiale which should exist between librarians—no matter from what region they hail.

Its success was in a very large measure due to the President (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers) who, after the regrettable illness of Mr. H. Vaux Hopwood, was indefatigable in his efforts to organize the excursion in the best way, and to bring the venture to a satisfactory conclusion. As a result of his untiring energy, some twenty chief and assistant librarians from all parts of the country spent a thoroughly happy and profitable week-end, proving the truth of the words,

*"Four crowded days of glorious life,
Are worth an age without a name."*

The party consisted of the Misses M. Gilbert (Fulham), J. Warner (Croydon), N. Morgan (Leeds), E. Pritchard (Leeds), E. and W. Austin (Stamford Hill), O. Muhlenfeld (Hilversum, Holland) and O. E. Clarke (Islington), and Messrs. E. Carberry (Dublin), H. W. Checketts (Birmingham), F. G. Farr (Bristol), W. J. Harris (Bromley, Kent), A. J. Hawkes (Leeds), A. Kidd (Woolwich), Wyndham Morgan (Cardiff), E. Roberts (Horwich), W. C. Berwick Sayers (Croydon), F. Spender (Liverpool), E. Terry (Greenwich), and J. Warner (Croydon).

The main party left Charing Cross at 9 p.m. Thursday, April 13th, and arrived at Brussels early on Friday morning after a pleasant voyage over a calm and moonlit sea.

With the exception of Sunday, the mornings were devoted to the study of the work and methods of the "Institut International de Bibliographie et Documentation," whilst the rest of the day was occupied by visits to buildings and places of interest in which the whole of the company took part. A full report of the information gained from the lectures of M. Otlet will be given at a later date by various members of the party, and these few notes are only intended to serve as a brief sketch of the events which were crowded into four days.

At 10 a.m. on Friday, the students received a cordial welcome from M. Paul Otlet, who, in the absence of his colleague M. La Fontaine, delivered a series of lectures in English on the various activities of the Institut. The first lecture, which was delivered in the cataloguing department, was a lantern one and dealt with the aims and general work of the Institut. This was founded in 1895 after an international conference called to consider means by which books might be made more accessible to scholars and ordinary readers. It was recognized that the book is the reservoir of knowledge from which all classes of society must take information of utility to them. Internationalism was not only an ideal system, but it was based upon realities: economy had become universal in all branches of work, in industry, commerce, and finance: science was international. The book is the concrete object of science, and all books which may arise must be looked upon as a paragraph of general knowledge: it is therefore necessary to have an index of books and periodicals, and, in consequence, all special and national bibliographies must be regarded as part of a bibliographic catalogue. There is therefore a need for a centralisation of methods of bibliography, and in the future these methods must be co-ordinated in order to produce a universal catalogue. The bibliography of the future must have before its eyes registration in either book or card form, from which the universal bibliography must be compiled. Uniformity on certain points must exist, for, without such uniformity, the centralisation of bibliography cannot be effective. The card-catalogue must be the first means of co-operation, for it is in universal use, and cards of uniform size can be obtained. As the metric, or decimal system is known throughout Europe, America, and England, the metric system must be used for classification purposes: the use of the Decimal Classification is advocated so that a subject index, in which everything written on one subject shall be together, may be made.

The Institut is in three buildings, or parts of buildings, and consists of a museum, a library—formed of the collections of several societies—consisting of some 13,000 books, and a register, numbering over 10,000,000 cards, of the literature existing on all subjects.

At the conclusion of the lecture the visitors were escorted to the magnificent Palais de Justice, in several of whose courts cases were in progress. After a thorough inspection of this immense building, a return journey through the Avenue Louise was made, and the party adjourned to lunch. During the afternoon a visit was paid to the library of the Institute Solvay, which was established by M. Solvay for the study of economic and social science. It is probably the most luxurious, as well as one of the most beautiful libraries in the world, and possesses an extraordinary collection of magazines and periodicals dealing with sociology in all its aspects. Each reader is provided with a separate desk fitted with everything he is likely to require, and in addition, there are various small studies in which special students may work. For the sake of uniformity the books are shelved in cases of uniform height. Outside the Institute Solvay a photo of the group was taken, and then the whole party visited "Old England" for tea! From the roof-garden it is possible to obtain an exceedingly good bird's-eye view of the city and its surroundings: picture-postcards and cameras were much in evidence for the next hour or so, and at least three people were so engrossed by thoughts of those they'd left behind them, that they absent-mindedly partook of two teas apiece! From "Old England" the party proceeded by tram to the Bois de Cambre; through those picturesque glades they sauntered till the lake, with its Robinson Crusoe island, was reached: a boat was then chartered by some of the more venturesome spirits, who had an enjoyable pull round, whilst the others enjoyed some desultory conversation. The party split up on the return journey—some to seek their beds, and others to see the city by night, and so ended the first day of the pilgrimage.

Refreshed by their slumbers some eight or nine of the pilgrims arose early Saturday morning, and sauntered down to the Grand Place and other parts of the city, to view the various vegetable and flower markets. At 10 o'clock M. Otlet received the students in the building in which the universal catalogue and the Belgian Union Catalogue are stored. A preliminary examination of the catalogues was made, and then M. Otlet gave a graphic

description, illustrated by various interesting diagrams, of the building-up of the catalogue and the classification. The Universal Catalogue is in two series: the first is an alphabetic author catalogue, and the second a classified subject catalogue. The entries are made on cards of uniform size, (5-in. \times 3-in.) but these are sometimes printed, sometimes typewritten, and sometimes in manuscript: the Institut receives and files the cards of the Library of Congress, of the Concilium Bibliographicum (Zurich), and of the Royal Library, Berlin. The cards are stored in trays which are kept in cabinets resembling the ordinary card-cabinet on a huge scale: the trays are guided by guide-cards, reading from left to right, of different colours to differentiate subject, time, place and language. Certain symbols are also in use,* and these serve to shew the difference between the meanings of numbers and to avoid confusion. The iconographical section, consisting of a collection of photographs of all kinds, negatives, lantern-slides, etc., all arranged in classified order, was then inspected.

The afternoon was spent on the field of the Battle of Waterloo: the ascent of the Lion Monument was made, and at the summit Sergeant-Major Yates reconstructed the battle in an exceedingly vivid manner. With their minds stirred by his account, the enthusiastic party walked across the battlefield, visited the Gordon and Hanoverian monuments, the farm of La Haie Sainte, the pathetic monument erected "Aux derniers combattants de la Grande Armée;" and the farm of Hougomont where traces of the combat are still visible.

In the evening the majority of the party went to the Opera where they enjoyed a very fine rendering of Meyerbeer's "L'Africaine," and a view of one of the most magnificent opera-houses of Europe.

(To be continued.)

NEW MEMBERS.

MEMBERS: F. G. Farr, Bristol Medical Library; Miss A. C. Gebhard, Amsterdam.

ASSOCIATE: Miss H. Penfold, Brighton.

North Eastern Branch.—ASSOCIATES: Miss Magog, Tynemouth; T. Smurthwaite, Newcastle.

South Wales Branch.—ASSOCIATES: Misses A. H. Allen, F. A. Hooper, and L. Robbins, Cardiff.

Midland Branch.—G. L. Burton, Selly Oak.

*It is hoped to publish as soon as possible a description of the "Institut" classification scheme.

PROCEEDINGS.

APRIL MEETING.

The April meeting of the Library Assistants' Association, though poorly attended, proved to be one of great interest on account of the value of the papers that were read. It was held at the Passmore Edwards Settlement, Tavistock Place, at 8 p.m., Mr. W. Benson Thorne (Poplar), being in the chair. The first paper, by Mr. C. Parry Jackson, of the Royal Colonial Institute, on "Maps: their Value, Provision, and Storage," was read, in his unavoidable absence, by Mr. B. Crook, of Leyton, and will be published in a later number of "The Library Assistant," together with the interesting discussion which followed. The President (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers), then read a paper on "Library Lectures: their Preparation and Delivery," which will also appear as soon as practicable. After the discussion had ended the Chairman moved a vote of thanks to the readers of the paper, which was seconded by the Honorary Editor. The President responded, after which a vote of thanks to the trustees of the Passmore Edwards Settlement, in support of which Mr. R. B. Prideaux (Reform Club) referred to the good work being done by the Settlement, and suggested that the Association would do well to meet more frequently in such institutions, concluded the meeting.

NORTH-EASTERN BRANCH.

The North-Eastern Branch concluded its third session with a meeting at the Tynemouth Public Library, North Shields, on Wednesday, March 22nd, 1911. Mr. J. Walton (Newcastle) presided over an attendance of 36. Discussion was opened upon the following subjects:—"The desirability of placing all local records in a municipal library; the best means of preserving the same and making them accessible to the public," by T. E. Turnbull, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, "Aids necessary to annotators," by D. W. Herdman, Sunderland. Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Herdman dealt exhaustively with their subjects, and provoked much interesting and valuable discussion. At the conclusion of the meeting the result of the election of officers for 1911-12 was declared as follows:—Chairman, W. Wilson, Gateshead; vice-chairman, T. E. Turnbull, Newcastle; hon. secretary, R. Wright, Sunderland; hon. treasurer, I. Briggs, Newcastle; committee—members (4 required), W. H. Gibson, D. W. Herdman, R. M. Daniel, Miss F. Brooks.

Not elected, Miss Forman, Miss Evers, J. W. Lambert, H. Fostall, J.E. Walker, R. H. U. Potts ; associates (4 required), A. E. Thompson, W. Smettem, A. T. Ord, Miss M. L. Coatsworth. Not elected, Miss L. Green, Miss M. Corbett, W. W. Howe. The retiring chairman (Mr. J. Walton) is an *ex-officio* member of the committee for the forthcoming year.

OBITUARY.

JOHN PASSMORE EDWARDS.

A notable figure, and one beloved in the library world, has passed away in Mr. John Passmore Edwards, whose death occurred at his residence, Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead, in his 88th year. A Cornishman by birth, Mr. Passmore Edwards came to London and engaged himself in publishing and journalism. His first efforts as a publisher were a failure, and he had to go through the ordeal of the Bankruptcy Court. But when, by hard work, he at last won success in the publication of important and influential trade journals, such as the "Mechanics' Magazine" and the "Building News," he sought out his creditors and paid them in full, with a substantial interest. His most important venture was the ownership of "The Echo," which, from a state of decline, he brought to the height of prosperity and influence. He sold the paper at an enormously enhanced cost, to a syndicate, which had Mr. Carnegie at its head, but re-purchased it when a disagreement occurred between the proprietors. One other paper we can mention, "The Weekly Times," with which Mr. Passmore Edwards was associated as proprietor. Latterly he was living in retirement, but retained almost to the last an extraordinary vigour.

From the time of his earliest success Mr. Passmore Edwards started a series of benefactions, which resulted in a total, the influence for good of which cannot really be estimated. Convalescent homes, institutes for the training of the young for their future battles in life, hospitals, public parks, art galleries, and last, but not least, public libraries figure among his gifts. A melancholy interest attaches to the last meeting of "The Library Assistants' Association," which took place at one of the most well-known of all the institutions that he founded—the Passmore Edwards' Settlement, Tavistock Place—and it is with pleasure that we can look back to the opportunity of seeing, while he was still alive, this splendid monument to a generosity, that,

looking beyond the mere bodily needs of the race, provided for its spiritual and social upraising. The public libraries that he built are far too numerous to attempt to mention, and an important feature of his gifts was that he often added to the buildings a splendid donation of books. After all, what is a library without books? They are its very soul, and the books that he gave have not the least power for good of his many gifts. If an enduring motto were required for Mr. Passmore Edwards, and a title to remembrance greater than the honour of knighthood, which he twice declined, none more appropriate could be found than "The more I gave the more I received."

H.R.P.

WORK OF THE COUNCIL.

A Meeting of the Council was held at the Bishopsgate Institute, E.C., on Wednesday, April 19th, 1911, the President being in the chair. The Treasurer reported a balance in hand of £31 19s. 9d., and accounts for payment amounting to £9 14s. 1d. The Editor reported that, as the representative of the L.A.A., he had attended a meeting of Editors convened for the purpose of obtaining a cheaper and uniform rate of postage on newspapers and magazines, other than those issued at not less than weekly intervals. A Committee had been formed with this end in view, and it was hoped that the effort would be successful. It was suggested that the printing of a combined catalogue of the libraries of the Library Association and the L.A.A. was desirable, especially in the view of the needs of Non-London assistants, and it was resolved that the Council of the Library Association be approached respecting the practicability of the scheme. The President reported that the recent Easter School at Brussels had been completely successful, the success in a large measure being due to the kindness of Mr. Orlot of the Institut International de Bibliographie. On the proposition of Mr. Thorne, seconded by Miss Clarke, it was resolved that Thursday meetings be discontinued next session. Volunteers were obtained for the work of duplicating copies of the report on conditions of library service now almost completed.

APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES.

GORDON, Mr. R. J., Senior Assistant, Rochdale Public Libraries, has been appointed Chief Librarian.

HANSON, Mr. GEORGE, Chief Librarian, Rochdale Public Libraries, has resigned, owing to failing health, after 40 years' service.

MCCALL, Mr. G. H., late of the Limehouse Public Library, has been appointed librarian to Baron J. A. de Rothschild in Paris.

†NOWELL, Mr. CHARLES, Senior Assistant in the Kendal Public Library, has been appointed Senior Assistant in the Ashton-under-Lyne Public Library.

† Member L.A.A.